

## **WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

### **COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES**

**DATE:           OCTOBER 22, 2010**

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#### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS   THOMAS  
                    KENNY  
                    BENTLEY  
                    MERLINO  
                    STRAINER  
                    LOEB  
                    MCDEVITT

#### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:  
                    SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER  
                    DEANNA PARK, DIRECTOR, COUNTRYSIDE ADULT  
                                    HOME  
                    MARGARET SMITH, DIRECTOR, YOUTH BUREAU  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR/ATTORNEY  
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISORS   SOKOL  
                                    McCOY  
ROBERT IUSI, DIRECTOR, PROBATION DEPARTMENT  
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*  
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Thomas called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Commencing the agenda review, Ms. Weaver presented four travel requests as follows:

- ▶ New Child Protective Services (CPS) Caseworker to attend the Caseworker/CPS Common Core Training, in Syracuse, NY, from November 28 - December 3, 2010; December 12 - 17, 2010; December 27 - 30, 2010 and January 10 - 14, 2011, at a room rate of \$43.50 per night, a meal cost of \$13 per day for lunch, and \$29 for dinner once per training segment.
- ▶ Maureen Taylor to attend the Caseworker/CPS Supervisory Core Module I Training, in Syracuse, NY, from November 2 - 4, 2010 and November 15 - 18, 2010, at a room rate of \$43.50 per night, a meal cost of \$13 per day for lunch, and \$29 for dinner once per training segment.

- ▶ Maureen Taylor to attend the Caseworker/CPS Supervisor Core Module II Training, in Albany, NY, from December 7 - 9, 2010 and December 20 - 22, 2010, at a room rate of \$50.00 per night and a meal cost of \$15 per day.
- ▶ Diane Perry to attend the Welfare To Work Caseload Management System Training, in Rensselaer, NY, from December 14 - 15, 2010, at a room rate of \$47 per night and a meal cost of \$15 per day.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve all four travel requests as outlined above. *Copies of the Authorizations to attend Meeting or Convention are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver presented a request to abolish two positions of Typist #5 and #9 and create the positions of Keyboard Specialist #5 and #4 respectively, at a base salary of \$23,799. She stated the title of Typist was obsolete and would be replaced by the Keyboard Specialist title with no change in salary or job description.

Motion was made by Mr. Loeb, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the requests to abolish the Typist positions #5 and #9 and create the positions of Keyboard Specialist #5 and #4 as outlined above and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Requests to Create New Positions are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver presented a request to fill the position of Keyboard Specialist #5, base salary of \$23,799, Employee No. 9132, due to resignation. She noted the salary for the position was fully reimbursed.

Mr. Loeb asked if the need to change the position title was due to advancing technologies and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. She explained the obsolescence of typewriters caused the need to change the position title. She reiterated that the positions of Typist and Keyboard Specialist were identical.

Motion was made by Mr. Loeb, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve the requests to fill the vacant position as outlined above and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver presented a request to amend the 2010 County Budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$70,000 due to a lack of Medicaid funds for health insurance and transportation expenses.

Motion was made by Mr. Loeb, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the 2010 County Budget as outlined above and to refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request to Amend County Budget is on*

*file with the minutes.*

Addressing Old Business, Ms. Weaver referred to the pending item relative to temporary housing for the homeless and Paul Dusek, County Administrator/Attorney, recounted consideration of utilizing a County-owned parcel located near the Warren County Airport for temporary housing for homeless sex offenders. Local zoning regulations, he declared, as well as Historic Preservation rules had prevented the use of the property in this manner. Continuing, Mr. Dusek apprised that the former Ciba Giegy site on lower Warren Street had been considered and was found to be zoned for industrial use only. With no potential County-owned parcels for consideration, he said, it was the decision of the Committee to extend the search to include the possible purchase of a parcel to be used for temporary housing for the homeless.

Mr. Merlino reported he had received numerous inquiries from residents questioning the County's obligation to provide temporary housing for sex offenders. Mr. Dusek explained that it was a common public misperception, and the mandate stated that the DSS would provide temporary housing assistance for those in need. Some of the homeless individuals, he noted, were sex offenders thereby necessitating additional parameters in order to maintain public safety. Ms. Weaver pointed out that such services were dictated by the United States Constitution.

Chairman Monroe stated that local laws impacted homeless placement by limiting acceptable locations and Ms. Weaver concurred. She added that it was particularly challenging to place homeless sex offenders in temporary housing and the local laws had been overturned due to unconstitutionality. Ms. Weaver further noted that the County extended assistance to the incarcerated and paroled, as well.

Ms. Weaver stated that grant funds could be used toward the purchase of property. Mr. Merlino informed of a hotel for sale in the Town of Luzerne which was located on an isolated parcel. At Mr. Strainer's request, Ms. Weaver reported the average number of homeless sex offenders per month to be between four and eight. She further stated that the recipients were mandated to pursue employment and housing opportunities with the exception of those who qualified for Disability benefits. Ms. Weaver advised that it behooved local residents to remain most vigilant of the locations of the registered sex offenders in their neighborhoods as the number which required temporary housing was significantly smaller by comparison.

A discussion ensued and Ms. Weaver stated that only basic amenities were provided for the homeless.

Mr. Dusek recounted that a full effort had been devoted to the Open Door Soup Kitchen project recently, and following the identification of a grant opportunity for temporary housing for homeless sex offenders, County efforts were redirected accordingly. Mr. McDevitt interjected that the issue of temporary housing was the basis of community opposition to the facility, and the soup kitchen was not of concern.

On a day to day basis, he expounded, the public viewed the soup kitchen as a temporary operation; however, he said, housing placements tended to draw clients to the streets for longer periods, thereby raising concern.

A discussion ensued.

Mr. Loeb suggested that the Committee allow Mr. Dusek and Ms. Weaver to identify the best solution and he recognized that the public was eager for resolve and closure of the issue. Mr. Kenny advised that nothing had precluded the current process from being the best solution, as long as the best interest of the taxpayers was the priority.

Motion was made by Mr. Loeb, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried by majority vote, with Mr. Kenny voting in opposition, to authorize Warren County to seek parcels for sale for the purpose of temporary housing for the homeless.

Continuing with the agenda review, Ms. Weaver reported an increase in overtime and a significant increase in the number of new reports for the period. Regarding the Budget Status Report, Ms. Weaver stated that due to the receipt of State funds for the Child Protective Unit, overtime expenses were reduced by 33%. Mr. Loeb asked the reason for the increase in overtime usage and Ms. Weaver stated the primary reason was the negative state of the economy. Unfortunately, she explained, economic conditions often led to a cascade of circumstances, thereby raising the number of reports. Additionally, she said, one new staff person was in training and one position was vacant, which also effected the need for overtime. Noting seasonal trends, Ms. Weaver reported an unprecedented number of reports received over the summer. She noted that schools, police, doctors and hospitals were examples of mandated reporters.

Referring to the Budget Analysis, Revenue and Budget Performance Reports, Ms. Weaver reported that overall budget utilization was reduced by 6.79% and 20.65% for the DSS and Countryside Adult Home, respectively. She reported expenditures at 63% and 67%, and revenues at 61% and 45% for Countryside Adult Home and the DSS, respectively. She noted a reduction in total salaries which was due to the abolishment of four positions, as well as several vacancies.

Regarding caseloads, Ms. Weaver cautioned that the Department was approaching a crisis level in some areas and she estimated a total caseload of 500 Disability claims by the end of the year.

Mr. Loeb questioned the reasons for the dramatic increase and Ms. Weaver replied that welfare reform enabled more individuals to qualify for Social Security/Disability benefits, and the 2009 Departmental reorganization, which had abolished some supervisory staff and added front line staff, had resulted in an increase in the number of referrals and determinations for the unit. Warren County, she informed, was given approval to process disability determinations on site with the use of a private

contractor. She noted that a higher level of State aid was paid for individuals who were eligible for both Disability and Medicaid benefits.

A discussion ensued and Ms. Weaver stated that she would review the Disability numbers indicated on the agenda, the criteria for changes in eligibility and statistics in other counties.

Ms. Weaver summarized the growing number of cases for Facilitated Enrollment applications, Child Protective reports, Medicaid benefits, Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance Services and Temporary Assistance Appointments and Emergencies. She commended her dedicated staff whose efforts resulted in the delivery of the necessary and appropriate services to clients.

Relative to the collaborative effort between the DSS and Public Health Department, Ms. Weaver stated that due to the rising caseload in the Child Protective Unit, a prenatal program serving pregnant mothers and infants had been initiated which offered expanded services. Ms. Weaver stated that she would meet with Pat Auer, Director of Public Health, in this regard. Mr. Thomas asked if it would result in contractual cost savings and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. She noted the savings would be derived from the Community Services contract.

Ms. Weaver requested permission to make payment to the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) for retroactive bills, in the amount of \$135,769. She apprised that \$172,691 was included in the budget for that expenditure.

Further regarding the OCFS, Ms. Weaver informed of a retroactive rate increase for a total amount of approximately \$54,000 to be paid this year. She noted that the bill for 2004 and 2005 in the amount of \$135,769 as noted above, was received in 2009. She explained that the State had reevaluated detention home rates and due to the fact that fully staffed facilities often had no clients, the current daily rate of \$750 was expected to increase to \$900. Ms. Weaver stated that the Union contract required detention homes to be fully staffed regardless of client population or lack thereof.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Loeb to authorize payment to the OCFS in the amount of \$135,769, as outlined above.

Mr. Dusek stated that he had researched the law regarding late billing as described above and confirmed that Warren County was obligated to make payment to the OCFS as calculated by the State. Mr. Dusek cautioned that although Warren County was fortunate to have no children in detention at this time, if the need were to arise, the cost would be exorbitant.

Mr. Thomas called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to authorize payment to the OCFS in the amount of \$135,769 and the necessary resolution was authorized for the November 19, 2010 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution*

*request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver stated that the State would retain an additional 1.1% from all bottom line adjustments until March 2011 which included all program areas. She noted that she would record all such transactions for possible reimbursements next year.

Mr. Thomas expounded that the local taxpayer contribution rate had been raised to 26.1%, and the State's share was reduced from 25% to 23.9%. He asserted that some individuals running for Office had proposed a tax cap while the State continued to shift costs to the local taxpayer. He asserted that courage in leadership was essential to either reform or eliminate programs, or fight for State funding. He further opined that it was wrong to encumber local governments for problems the State had not effectively addressed or resolved.

Mr. Merlino asked if the County tracked recipient residency and Ms. Weaver stated that each program had different residency requirements. She explained that the county in which the recipient was first determined to be homeless was responsible for housing benefits. The issuance of Medicaid benefits, she said, was the responsibility of the county within which the recipient first became eligible. Food Stamps and Temporary Assistance, she noted, would stay with the county of origin for a period of approximately two months, after which time the new county of residence was required to assume the responsibility. She added that if a recipient had not resigned from a job, they could apply for benefits upon arrival to a new county. Mr. McDevitt concurred that the Social Security Disability figure for 2010 was statistically incredulous.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Deanna Park, Director of Countryside Adult Home, who summarized the figures for overtime, census, referrals, admissions, discharges and Veterans applications, all of which were included in the agenda.

Ms. Park informed that Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) had requested the Countryside Adult Home to provide snow removal services for their building. She said the private contractor who had been paid \$10 per hour to clear the parking lot was no longer available. She apprised that Countryside currently plowed their building, as well as the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation Office and the driveway and a path around the building of the CCE. She stated that a cost would need to be determined.

Motion was made by Mr. Loeb, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to authorize Ms. Park to further review the cost and logistics for Countryside Adult Home staff to provide snow removal services for the CCE and report back to the Committee.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Margaret Smith, Director of the Youth Bureau, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Regarding State reimbursements, Mrs. Smith recounted that all reimbursements were reduced by 1.1% which resulted in a total amount of \$720 for all 19 Youth Programs. Mrs. Smith explained that due to the fact that one claim for the Alternative Sentencing Program was paid to the Community Action Center (CAC) prior to the adjustment, she

requested Committee approval to request \$23 from the CAC for the overpayment. Mr. Thomas recommended that she proceed to request the over paid amount of \$23 from the CAC.

Mrs. Smith presented a request to attend the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus Director & Staff Training and State Conference, in Albany, NY, from November 15 - 17, 2010, for a total cost of \$70 which was included in the Departmental budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Loeb and carried unanimously to approve the request for travel as outlined above. *A copy of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Conference is on file with the minutes.*

On behalf of the Warren County Youth Court, Mrs. Smith thanked Messrs. Kenny and Taylor, Mr. Dusek, Amy Bartlett, First Assistant County Attorney, and the Probation Department staff members who attended the recent Youth Court proceeding. She announced that training for the new Youth Court members would take place on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and the next Youth Court session would be held on Thursday, October 28, 2010.

Lastly, Mrs. Smith noted that the Youth Bureau was the co-sponsor of an educational program on teen suicide and depression.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Loeb, Mr. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist